

# HOPE Act will fund research, respect life

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By U.S. Sen. John Ensign

While the debate over stem cell research has become quite contentious, 70 United States senators recently joined together -- across party lines -- to pass the HOPE Act. This legislation allows federal funding to be used for embryonic stem cell research that does not destroy human life. The answer to this long-standing moral dilemma came with advances in science that have paved a road toward research that all Americans can enthusiastically support.

Innovative approaches in science provide that when some embryos die naturally, stem cell lines can be derived from them. Many researchers believe that human embryonic stem cell research has the potential to treat and better understand numerous diseases, in addition to the many successes that have already been made in the field of adult stem cell research. While I have voted against embryonic stem cell research in the past, I supported the HOPE Act because now such research can be performed without destroying human life.

Legislation considered the same day as the HOPE Act seeks to fund research on embryonic stem cell lines that have been derived from destroyed embryos. This opposing bill has lost its relevancy because of these advancements in technology, and President Bush has promised to veto the bill. Comparable research can be performed ethically through alternative methods, and this type of research will be eligible to receive federal funding under the HOPE Act. I agree with the strong majority of the Senate and believe that the HOPE Act provides the appropriate balance between promoting scientific innovation and safeguarding life.

Science has shown us that we do not need to destroy life in order to discover the cure for cancer, Alzheimer's disease or any other modern disease. Instead, we can encourage researchers to respect life, and we can fund promising research that relieves human suffering. It is an approach that is already working, and the potential is endless.

While partisanship in Washington unfortunately continues, the HOPE Act is a bill that brought together senators from different political parties. Americans should also come together, as the Senate recently did, to promote and support this bill because it encourages non-destructive alternatives for researching embryonic stem cells and creates real hope for future medical discoveries.

John Ensign is United States senator from Nevada.